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NATIONAL DEFENSE.

THIS subject has received the attention of the ablest official minds in the United States—civil, military, and naval. The general principles of the national defense have never been questioned by the men whose duty it has been to make the subject their study. There have been disagreements in matters of detail, and of the two branches of the service each has, at times, been led by zeal to place too much stress upon the importance of its own duties. But consultation and discussion among those members of the army and navy who have in view the single object of doing that which is best for the country's defense have always brought about the best results; and I venture the assertion that there is but one opinion to-day among those who have thought seriously on the subject as to the proper method of defending the United States against foreign attack.

During the War of Independence the sea-coast defenses which existed at its commencement were but little improved. The evacuation of Boston by the British was hastened by the erection of entrenchments on Dorchester Heights. The forts in the harbor were afterward occupied by our troops, and Boston was not again molested during the war. Charleston was successfully defended against the attack of a British squadron. The ships-of-war built by order of Congress and privateers inflicted great injury on British commerce between 1775 and 1783, and descents were even made on the coasts of England and Scotland by Paul Jones.

The improvement of the national defense between 1783 and 1812 was small, so far as the land service is concerned, although something was done in the fortification of the principal harbors and sea-ports. All towns of considerable size on the sea-board, from Portland, in Maine, south to New Orleans, were defended by small fortifications. From the close of the Revolu-

tionary War until 1797 there was virtually no United States navy, although a few small vessels were kept in commission by some of the States. From 1797 until 1812, several large ships-of-war and many smaller vessels were built and commissioned. The ships did good service during the war of 1812, and with the smaller vessels did credit to the American flag in the Tripolitan war. A few of them remained in existence until lately, and one, the Congress (rebuilt), was sunk by the Confederate ram Virginia (the Merrimac) in Hampton Roads, in 1862.

During the war of 1812, the Canadian frontier was defended by forts and fleets. The other frontiers then to be defended were those of the Atlantic and the Gulf, leaving the Indian frontier out of the question. The enemy was repulsed at Stonington, landed on the Potomac with little opposition, burned Washington, failed in the attempt to capture Baltimore, being checked at North Point and Fort McHenry, and was again foiled at Charleston, and Mobile, and New Orleans. The history of the navy from 1812 to 1815 is as well known to this generation as it was to its contemporaries. It does not seem, from the record of the war of 1812, that Great Britain attempted the invasion of the United States with the hope of making a permanent lodgment, but only for raiding and destructive purposes, as in the case of the burning of Washington.

Immediately after the close of the war of 1812, in the year 1816, President Madison formed a board of engineer officers, upon which was imposed the duty of devising a system of works of defense of the frontier of the United States. He also, by authority of Congress, called General Bernard, a French engineer officer of distinction, to preside over this board, a selection which caused the resignation of some of our best engineer officers, notably that of General Joseph G. Swift, at that time chief of engineers. This board did its work faithfully, and devised a system of fortification for the frontiers which was adopted by the General Government, and had been in a spasmodic course of execution from 1816 until the commencement of the Civil War in 1861. The Indian frontier, which extended from our Northern boundary to the mouth of the Sabine River, skirting the one hundredth degree of west longitude, was an important feature of the national defense at the time. In any discussion of the subject to-day, no account need be taken of any such frontier. The acquisition of Califor-

nia, the settlement of the Far West, and the consequent elimination of the Indian race, have destroyed it; and, indeed, in the quietest times it moved westward continually, and was never a fixed line.

The principles upon which the board of 1816 acted were founded upon the art of war; and if this assertion is true, the same principles should guide to-day, with the understanding that such modifications should be made as have become necessary from the improvement in war material of all kinds, the introduction of steam in the navigation of the ocean, and the building of railroads. The approaches from the sea to all large cities were to be defended by fortifications, which could not only resist attacks from fleets, but would require a regular siege, if attacked from the land side. The defenses for smaller places and harbors of refuge were to be correspondingly weaker, but strong enough to prevent a foreign fleet from taking refuge therein, and to defend our own vessels which might be forced to seek shelter from attack by an enemy's fleet. In time of war all of these permanent defenses were to be garrisoned by volunteers and militia taken from the nearest inhabitants. The regular army was to be the merest nucleus, only kept up for the purposes of caring for the forts, teaching new levies when war began, and protecting the Indian frontier. The navy was to be kept at such strength that it was to be able to protect our commerce and the honor of the flag in time of peace, and to cope with an enemy's fleet in time of war on the open sea, or to assist in the defense of our harbors. Such, in brief, was the system of defense adopted under the spur of the experience of the war with Great Britain. When this system was adopted, the infantry weapon was the flint-lock musket, the largest cannon afloat or ashore did not throw shot exceeding forty-two pounds in weight, ships of war were propelled by sails, and their strength was determined by the forces of the winds and waves. The strength of the forts, too, was what was required to resist breaching by the naval batteries of those days.

Shell guns were not then in use. Mortars of ten inches caliber were used, but mortar fire from or against vessels in a seaway had never been considered efficient. In the interval between the British war of 1812-15 and the Mexican war of 1846-48, the improvements in arms and ships were small. The percussion lock had been invented, but was not in use by our infantry.

Shell guns for fortifications and ships, of caliber as great as ten inches, had been brought into use; steam ships-of-war had been built, but these were regarded as experimental rather than practical, and the construction of railroads between important points in the United States had been commenced. During this same interval the system of defense adopted had been sharply discussed by advocates and enemies. Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Poinsett, Mr. B. F. Butler, of New York, Mr. Conrad, all as Secretaries of War; Commodore Morris and General Totten, and other engineer officers, all writing officially, sustained it; while it was attacked, with different degrees of violence and ability, by General Cass, as Secretary of War, in the Cabinet of General Jackson, who was President of the United States at the time, by General Gaines, and by a few officers of the navy and engineer officers of the army. But the system progressed in spite of opposition, and at the commencement of the Civil War the United States were reasonably well protected against foreign attack, considering the conditions of the attacking and defending forces.

Between the end of the Mexican War and 1861, the forces of attack and defense had greatly increased in power, and the United States, although lagging behind other nations, had to some extent kept up with the improvements in ships and guns and small-arms, but no large quantities of war material had been accumulated. Screw war steamers of great size, but not of great speed, the engines partially protected from shot, had displaced side-wheel steamers, and their armaments were nine-inch and eleven-inch guns. For coast defense, eight-inch, ten-inch, and twelve-inch guns were substituted for the old forty-two and thirty-two pounders, and the guns afloat and ashore were equal in efficiency to those in use among other nations. Rifled guns were, up to that time, experimental, and were not in general use. The rifle-musket had taken the place of the smooth-bore, and the soldier had confidence in his weapon, a feeling which he never before possessed. But the Civil War found the country entirely unprepared for the strain that was brought upon it, and the poverty which existed in military material of all kinds necessary for the organization of armies would have brought permanent disaster, except for the fact that our enemy was as badly off as we were. The men were present, but the arms were wanting.

The impetus given by the Civil War to the manufacture of small-arms, cannon, and iron-clad ships excited the inventive

genius of the people of both sides to the highest degree. The result was the application of metallic-cased cartridges to military arms, rifled cannon throwing one-hundred-pound shot, iron-clads of the Monitor and Ironsides types, and the development of torpedoes for offensive and defensive purposes. This movement did not cease when the war ended, but has continued until the present time. Machine-guns have been developed, and they are now recognized weapons in all military services. The torpedo system has been made practical by the army and navy, and officers of both services are instructed in the use and manufacture of these engines of war. The forts built a generation back, however, have been merely kept from falling to pieces, and there is not one of them that could prevent a modern ship-of-war from passing it, and the ships of the navy are in such condition that, while at the end of the Civil War the navy was the pride of the country, to-day patriotic sailors hang their heads when it is mentioned. Efficient breech-loading small-arms have been manufactured by the ordnance corps sufficient for the supply of the army and marine corps, and for a few State volunteer troops, but no store of them has been collected, so that there is nothing on hand for the armament of the militia. A few thousand volunteer or militia troops have been organized in the States, and are well uniformed and equipped, but the number is small and they are widely scattered. The only implement of warfare in which the United States have kept abreast of modern improvement is the torpedo, and yet it is doubtful whether there is a sufficient number of torpedoes owned by the United States to-day to defend efficiently one large sea-port.

On the other hand, all other civilized nations have for the past twenty years steadily progressed in the improvement and strengthening of forts, ships, guns, small-arms, and torpedoes. Efficient guns have been made and have come into use which weigh one hundred tons and throw projectiles weighing one ton, capable of piercing iron plates from twenty to twenty-four inches thick at distances of one thousand yards. To counteract the enormous power of such guns, iron-clad forts capable of sustaining the fire of the one-hundred-ton guns have been erected, and ships-of-war have been built which are proof even against such projectiles. In fact, all civilized countries except the United States recognize the principles of the art of war, and the wisdom of the hackneyed adage, "In time of peace prepare for war."

Our efforts have been confined to keeping the old forts in ordinary repair, to building a few ships not iron-clad, and repairing old ships, to supplying the little army with breech-loading small-arms, to making an insignificant annual appropriation for the armament of the militia, and to the development of the torpedo system. It is no exaggeration to say that there is no sea-board city in the United States that could not at this time be laid under contribution by a single hostile iron-clad ship, which, after receiving the contribution, or destroying the city by bombardment, could quietly steam out to sea without danger of damage from anything which any fort or ship of the United States can do. Every year the chiefs of the engineers and ordnance of the army and the heads of bureaus of the Navy Department, sustained by their respective chiefs, and by the Presidents of the United States, have given warning of the dangers which we incur by our inaction, and have urged the necessity of placing our harbors in a decent state of defense, of constructing guns equal in efficiency to those of other civilized nations, of collecting arms for a more speedy armament of the militia, and of building ships of the modern war type.

These men have done everything that it was in the power of men to do to awaken the people to a sense of our deficiencies in national defense. The only effect has been the appointment of boards by law to investigate the subjects of ships, guns, and forts. These boards perform the duties imposed upon them with fidelity and ability, and make proper recommendations. But the effect of their appointment by law is bad, however able their members may be. The responsibility is taken from those with whom it properly rests, and a want of confidence is shown in the proper departments and their subordinates, which, in time, will do harm. The result must be a divided responsibility. The money to carry out the recommendations of these boards has never been given, unless the appropriation made by the last Congress for the construction and armament of ships be an exception. The very information to procure which the boards were formed was already in the possession of the proper departments, and all that was necessary was to appropriate the money to utilize it. In the meantime, the forts and the ships have become worthless and the guns old iron.

Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent for objects which, to say the least, could have been postponed until an effi-

cient national defense by land and sea against all comers had been established. But virtually there has been spent not one cent for *defense*. Any one seeking for the cause of this neglect will find that all those whose duty it is to warn the people and their representatives of the danger have performed this duty in season and out of season. And subordinate officers of both services have shown by their discussions in technical societies, and by their official reports and testimony, that the army and navy are cognizant of and anxious about the dangers attending our undefended frontiers.

Nor is Congress alone in fault. Although it has power under the Constitution to "provide for the common defense" of the United States, and has not, for the period since the Civil War, exercised this power, yet had the people felt the interest in the subject which it deserves, the power would have been exercised. Congress follows public opinion, it does not form nor lead it. And in the case of the national defense, the people have not indicated that they are alive to the importance of the subject through State legislatures, the press, by public meetings, by action of commercial bodies, or by any other means. Seemingly, it is not of the slightest importance to them, and their representatives have only adopted their views. When the punishment comes, as it surely will come if the same neglect be continued, the people will not have even the poor satisfaction of laying the blame on their public servants. They must bear the blame themselves. No scape-goat will suffice.

If, therefore, the principles upon which the board of 1816 acted in devising a system of defense against foreign attack are correct, the important sea-board cities of the United States, and the harbors, should be defended by forts armed with the best modern guns, and constructed of iron or earth, or of a combination of the two materials, capable of preventing a fleet from passing them. Torpedoes should be stored in quantities sufficient to insure the destruction of a fleet attempting to enter the harbor channels, and shot-proof depots for the storage and manipulation of torpedoes and their materials in the presence of the enemy should be constructed. The navy should be kept abreast of modern improvements in ships and guns, as well as torpedoes, so that a foreign fleet should know, in undertaking a descent upon our coast, that it must fight before it can enter our waters. Material for the armament of the militia should be

collected in large quantities, so that raw levies could be armed at once. The formation of organized bodies of State troops, under their military laws, should be encouraged by every proper means; "an accurate record of all such organizations should be kept in possession of the War Department," and the organization and equipments of these troops should be made to conform, as nearly as possible, to what they should be in time of war.

Various reasons in explanation of the dilatory military policy of the United States since the end of the Civil War have been given, among others these :

First. The remoteness of the United States from any country likely to organize a hostile expedition is so great, and the failure of combinations for a distant military enterprise so probable, that we need not anticipate danger from such an undertaking. But the distance between France and Russia in 1812 was, so far as the time and means of traversing it by an army are concerned, ten times greater than is the distance between the United States and any European State. Yet this distance did not prevent the most gigantic expedition of modern times from making a successful entrance into Russia, and although the result was disastrous to the French, the expedition inflicted great injury upon Russia. In fact, the present distance between China and the United States (China being the most distant country with which the United States can ever come in conflict), viewed as to time and means of transport, is little, if at all, greater than was that between Russia and France in 1812, and this distance diminishes continually.

Second. The European powers are so jealous of each other that a war with the United States on the part of one of them would make an opportunity which would be seized by the others to wipe out old scores. So there is no danger of such a war. There is some force in this statement. But the war-making power in Europe is not in general in the possession of the people, and is held by the so-called governing classes. Should any cause of war arise between the United States and any European State, the jealousies of these governing classes would probably be small in comparison with their hatred of the United States and their free government, and the desire to embrace an opportunity to humble this country, and thus destroy its influence upon their people.

Third. The power of the United States is so great, and their trade is so important to the European powers, whose subjects, moreover, are large holders of American securities, that any of them would be loath to allow a difficulty with us to culminate in war. If wars were brought on deliberately and with wisdom on both sides, there might be force in this argument. But if deliberation, and wisdom, and justice ruled the nations in their relations with each other there would be no wars. Men and nations must be taken as they are, and history is full of instances in which sudden, foolish, and unjust wars have been carried on between nations of the highest civilization, without thought as to the respective powers of the nations engaged, and without care of the dismal consequences to both belligerents. The very fact that our relations are becoming more intimate with other nations makes the probability of quarrels with them greater. There is now scarcely a nation in Europe with which our trade in food products, or the citizenship question, might not at any time be the cause of bad blood.

Fourth. Taking the most unfavorable view of the subject, and supposing war unavoidable, the United States would have ample time to get ready, and would be prepared to drive off a foreign foe, no matter where his attack might be made. But it is not likely that negotiations leading to war would last longer than a few months. Our unprepared state would precipitate the crisis, and as years are required to build iron-clad forts and ships and modern guns, this argument needs no discussion. It is plain that it has no weight. In general, the public does not know until the danger confronts us that there is likelihood of war. In the case of the seizure of Mason and Slidell on board the English steamer *Trent* by one of our naval officers in 1862, we were somewhat prepared, because we were already in a state of war. In the difficulty with Spain in 1873, in the *Virginius* matter, and in that with Chili in 1881, concerning our diplomatic interference in the war between Chili and Peru, nothing was known by the people until the danger was imminent, and hasty measures for collecting and arming a fleet were taken in the first-named case without action of Congress. Yet in both of these cases the nations with which we were likely to be in conflict possessed ships which could have laid our sea-board cities under contribution, or could have destroyed them, and we could have done nothing to avoid the disgrace. Whether the existence of an efficient coast defense and

a powerful navy at these times would have modified our diplomacy and have produced different results cannot now be stated definitely; but valuable opportunities may have been lost through our weakness.

There is no ground for the belief that a foreign power will attempt to make a permanent lodgment in the United States. Such an effort, without the assistance of the people of the invaded part of the country, which under no circumstances would be given, would meet with speedy disaster, and no such project could be matured without ample warning to the United States. The attacks which are to be feared, and which should be provided against, would probably be of the nature of raids on a large scale, made against the exposed sea-ports, and with the least warning possible.

Fifth. It would have been an unwarrantable waste of money to attempt to keep abreast of modern improvements in the material of war, and we already have the benefit of foreign expenditure and experience without cost to us. Now it is true that we have not spent the money, but it is not true that we have the experience. Our officers, since 1865, have taken all the means at their disposal to acquaint themselves with the methods of constructing iron-clad forts and ships, and modern guns. But it is not in the nature of things that they or any other persons in the United States should know anything practically of the construction or handling of any of these things, as they are now made and handled. Several years (no man can tell the precise number) would be required before the first ship, fort, or gun could be completed, and several years more before they could be turned out in quantities sufficient to constitute an efficient defense, and our officers and men be made familiar with sailing the ships and handling the guns.

There are other arguments in favor of our past policy of a weak national defense, based upon the improbability of future wars, the increase of the feeling in favor of the settlement of disputes between nations by arbitration, etc. Those who believe that there will be no more war will not be persuaded by any argument from past experience, nor from what is going on in the world now, nor even if one were to rise from the dead. They will hold their opinions until the war is upon us. Even in 1861 there were men who believed that there would be no civil war in the United States.

It is an unpleasant task to tell unwelcome truths. The person who performs it is placed in the category of those who give unasked advice. Thousands of lives and much treasure will be saved, and national humiliation avoided, if the American people awake to their duty of properly defending their coasts, a duty the cost of the performance of which is infinitely small compared to the benefit to the United States which will inure from its proper and speedy performance, and the longer neglect of which is sure to bring punishment in this or a succeeding generation.

W. B. FRANKLIN.